

to a corage immortal; of whiche shrewes the grete hope, & the hye compassinges of shrewednesses, is ofte destroyed by a socdeyn ende, or they ben war; & that thing estabyleth to shrewes the ende of hir shrewednesse. For yif that shrewednesse maketh wrecches, than mot he nedes ben most wrecched that lengest is a shrewe; the whiche wikked shrewes wolde I demen aldermost unsely and caitifs, yif that hir shrewednesse ne were finisshed, at the leste way, by the outtereste deeth. For yif I have concluded sooth of the unselnesse of shrewednesse, than sheweth it cleerly that thilke wrecchednesse is withouten ende, the whiche is certain to ben perdurable. Certes, quod I, this conclusioun is hard & wonderful to graunte; but I knowe wel that it acordeth moche to the thinges that I have graunted herbiforn.

THOU hast, quod she, the right estimacioun of this; but whosoever wene that it be a hard thing to acorde him to a conclusioun, it is right that he shewe that some of the premisses ben false; or elles he moot shewe that the collacioun of proposiciouns nis nat speedful to a necesarie conclusioun. And yif it be nat so, but that the premisses ben ygraunted, ther is not why he sholde blame the argument, for this thing that I shal telle thee now ne shal nat seme lasse wonderful; but of the thinges that ben taken also it is necessarie; as who seyth, it folweth of that which that is purposed biforn. What is that? quod I.

CERTES, quod she, that is, that thise wikked shrewes ben more blisful, or elles lasse wrecches, that abyen the tormentes that they han deserved, than yif no peyne of justice ne chastysede hem. Ne this ne seye I nat now, for that any man mighte thenke, that the maners of shrewes ben coriged and chastysed by venjaunce, and that they ben brought to the right wey by the drede of the torment, ne for that they yeven to other folk ensauple to fleen fro vyces; but I understande yit in another manere, that shrewes ben more unsely whan they ne ben nat punisshed, albeit so that ther ne be had no resoun or lawe of correccioun, ne non ensauple of lokinge. And what manere shal that ben, quod I, other than hath be told herbiforn? Have we nat thanne graunted, quod she, that goode folk ben blisful, and shrewes ben wrecches? Yis, quod I. Thanne, quod she, yif that any good were added to the wrecchednesse of any wight, nis he nat more weleful than he that ne hath no medlinge of good in his solitarie wrecchednesse? So semeth it, quod I.

AND what seystow thanne, quod she, of thilke wrecche that laketh alle goodes, so that no good nis medled in his wrecchednesse, & yif, overal his wikkednesse for which he is a wrecche, ther be yit another yvel anexed and knit to him, shal nat men demen him more unsely than thilke wrecche of whiche the unselnesse is releved by the participacioun of som good? Why sholde he nat? quod I.

THANNE, certes, quod she, han shrewes, whan they ben punisshed, somwhat of good anexed to hir wrecchednesse, that is to seyn, the same peyne that they suffren, which that is good by the resoun of justice; and whan thilke same shrewes ascapen withoute torment, than han they somwhat more of yvel yit, that is to seyn, defaute of peyne; which defaute of peyne, thou hast graunted, is yvel for the deserte of felonye. I ne may nat denyte it, quod I. Moche more thanne, quod she, ben shrewes unsely, whan they ben wrongfully delivered fro peyne, than whan they ben punisshed by rightful venjaunce. But this is open thing & cleer, that it is right that shrewes ben punisshed, and that it is wikkednesse & wrong that they escapen unpunished. Who mighte deneye that? quod I. But, quod she, may any man deneye that al that is right nis good; & also the contrarie, that al that is wrong is wikked? Certes, quod I, these thinges ben clere ynough; and that we han concluded a litel herbiforn. But I praye thee that thou telle me, yif thou acordest to leten no torment to sowles, after that the body is ended by the deeth; this is to seyn, understandestow aught that sowles han any torment after the deeth of the body?

CERTES, quod she, ye; & that right greet; of which sowles, quod she, I trowe that some ben tormentid by asprenesse of peyne; and some sowles, I trowe, ben exercised by a purginge mekenesse. But my conseil nis nat to determine of this peynes. But I have travailed and told yit hiderto, for thou sholdest knowe that the mowinge of shrewes, which mowinge thee semeth to ben unworthy, nis no mowinge; & eek of shrewes, of which thou pleinedest that they ne were nat punisshed, that thou woldest seen that they ne weren nevermo withouten the tormentes of hir wikkednesse: and of the licence of the mowinge to don yvel, that thou preydest that it mighte some ben ended, & that thou woldest fayn lermen that it ne sholde nat longe dure: and that shrewes ben more unsely yif they were of lenger duringe, and most unsely yif they weren perdurable.

And after this, I have shewed thee that more unsely ben shrewes, whan they escapen withoute hir rightful peyne, than whan they ben punisshed by rightful venjaunce. And of this sentence folweth it, that thanne ben shrewes constreined at the laste with most grevous torment, whan men wene that they ne be nat punisshed.

THAN I consider thy resouns, quod I, I ne trowe nat that men seyn anything more verayly. And yif I torne ayein to the studies of men, who is he to whom it sholde seme that he ne sholde nat only leven these thinges, but eek gladly herkne hem?

CERTES, quod she, so it is; but men may nat, for they han hir eyen so wont to the derkenesse of erthly thinges, that they ne may nat liften hem up to the light of cleer sothfastnesse; but they ben lyke to briddes, of which the night lightneth hir lokinge, and the day blindeth hem. For whan men loken nat the ordre of thinges, but hir lustes and talents, they wene that either the leve or the mowinge to don wikkednesse, or elles the scapinge withoute peyne, be weleful. But consider the jugement of the perdurable lawe, for yif thou conferme thy corage to the beste thinges, thou ne hast no nede of no juge to yeven thee prys or mede; for thou hast joyned thyself to the most excellent thing. And yif thou have enclyned thy studies to the wikked thinges, ne seek no foreyne wreker out of thyself; for thou thyself hast thrist thyself into wikked thinges: right as thou mightest loken by diverse tymes the foul erthe and the hevne, and that alle other thinges stinten fro withoute, so that thou nere neither in hevne ne in erthe, ne saye nothing more; than it sholde semen to thee, as by only resoun of lokinge, that thou were now in the sterres and now in the erthe. But the poeple ne loketh nat on these thinges. What thanne? Shal we thanne aprochen us to hem that I have shewed that they ben lyk to bestes? And what woltow seyn of this: yif that a man hadde al forlorn his sighte and hadde foryeten that he ever saugh, and wende that nothing ne faylede him of perfeccioun of mankind, now we that mighten seen the same thinges, wolde we nat wene that he were blinde? Ne also ne acordeth nat the poeple to that I shal seyn, the which thing is sustened by a stronge foundement of resouns, that is to seyn, that more unsely ben they that don wrong to othere folk than they that the wrong suffren. I wolde heren thilke same resouns, quod I. Denyestow, quod she, that alle shrewes ne ben worthy to han torment? Nay, quod I. But,

quod she, I am certein, by many resouns, that shrewes ben unsely. It acordeth, quod I. Thanne ne douteestow nat, quod she, that thilke folk that ben worthy of torment, that they ne ben wrecches? It acordeth wel, quod I. Yif thou were thanne, quod she, yset a juge or a knower of thinges, whether, trowestow, that men sholden tormenten him that hath don the wrong, or elles him that hath suffred the wrong? I ne doute nat, quod I, that I nolde don suffisaunt satisfaccioun to him that hadde suffred the wrong by the sorwe of him that hadde don the wrong. Thanne semeth it, quod she, that the doere of wrong is more wrecche than he that suffred wrong? That folweth wel, quod I.

THAN, quod she, by these causes & by othere causes that ben enforced by the same rote, filthe or sinne, by the propre nature of it, maketh men wrecches; & it sheweth wel, that the wrong that men don nis nat the wrecchednesse of him that receyveth the wrong, but the wrecchednesse of him that doth the wrong. But certes, quod she, these oratours or advocats don al the contrarie; for they enforcen hem to commoeve the juges to han pitee of hem that han suffred & receyved the thinges that ben grevous and aspre, and yit men sholden more rightfully han pitee of hem that don the grevaunces and the wronges; the whiche shrewes, it were a more covenable thing, that the accusours or advocats, nat wroth but pitous & debonaire, ledden the shrewes that han don wrong to the jugement, right as men leden syke folk to the leche, for that they sholde seken out the maladyes of sinne by torment. And by this covenant, either the entente of deffendours or advocats sholde faylen and cesen in al, or elles, yif the office of advocats wolde bettre profiten to men, it sholde ben torned into the habite of accusacioun; that is to seyn, they sholden accuse shrewes, and nat excuse hem. And eek the shrewes herself, yif hit were lewful to hem to seen at any clifte the vertu that they han forleten, & sawen that they sholden putten adoun the filthes of hir vyces, by the tormentes of peynes, they ne oughten nat, right for the recompensacioun for to geten hem bountee and prowesse which that they han lost, demen ne holden that thilke peynes weren tormentes to hem; & eek they wolden refuse the attendaunce of hir advocats, and taken himself to hir juges and to hir accusours. for which it bitydeth that, as to the wyse folk, ther nis no place yleten to hate; that is to seyn, that ne hate hath no place amonges wyse men. for no wight nil haten goode men,